

SHIPS NAMED LAFHEY

After a brief rest at San Pedro Bay (8-10 December 1944), LAFHEY returned to patrol duty in Leyte Gulf. On the evening of 10 December, one of the patrolling ships, HUGHES (DD-410), was hit by a suicide plane and left dead in the water in Surigao Strait. While the rest of the group performed screening duties, LAFHEY went to the rescue of the stricken ship, removing casualties and sending men aboard with gasoline pumps to begin pumping out flooded spaces. With damage control well underway, LAFHEY took HUGHES in tow, taking her clear of the land and headed for Leyte Gulf. After about an hour, a tug arrived to take over the job, and with LAFHEY and the remainder of the Task Group screening, HUGHES was brought safely into San Pedro Bay at daylight on 11 December.

LAFHEY, who had aboard the best in radar and sonar, next acted as fighter director ship from 12-17 December 1944 while troops were landed at Mindoro. Her next duty came on patrol on 26-27 December when a false alarm went out concerning the approach of enemy surface vessels.

With the opening of 1945, LAFHEY took part in screening and fire support operations between 2 and 22 January as landings were made on the beaches of Lingayen Gulf. After two months in the Philippines, she left those waters 22 January for Ulithi, where she arrived 27 January.

Between 10 February and 2 March 1945, LAFHEY operated in support of Task Force 58 in its air strikes against the Japanese homeland, and in its operations supporting the Iwo Jima invasion. A courier run took LAFHEY to Guam, then back to join the Task Group at Ulithi on 2 March.

After training with battleships at Ulithi, LAFHEY got underway on 21 March 1945 with Task Force 54 to take part in the Okinawa campaign. Arriving off Okinawa during the night 24-25 March, LAFHEY aided in the capture of Kerama Retto, the pre-invasion bombardment of Okinawa itself, and in close support of the initial landing. During the next two weeks, LAFHEY served as radar picket for two days, engaged in shore bombardment on five different days, fired harassing fire through two nights and illuminating fire on two other nights. The balance of her time was spent in screening heavy fleet units, or in patrolling area screens.

On 13 April 1945, LAFHEY was ordered to report for duty on Radar Picket Station Number 1, about thirty miles north of Okinawa. She arrived on station the next day, and went into action at once. Within a few hours after taking up her duties, her fighter director personnel had assisted in the destruction of thirteen enemy airplanes. The following day was relatively quiet, but it was on 16 April that the Japanese made an all-out effort to put LAFHEY out of action for all time.

Before 0820 on 16 April 1945, Combat Air Patrol controlled from LAFHEY had splashed four enemy planes. As things quietened for a few minutes, LAFHEY's radar screens blossomed with indications of a new enemy raid, numbering more than fifty Japanese planes. The attack began at 0827, and lasted for eighty minutes. Although Combat Air Patrol attacked the enemy furiously, and downed many of his planes, at least 22 got through to LAFHEY. Of these, nine were downed by LAFHEY's own anti-aircraft efforts, and several more met their doom from a combination of anti-aircraft shells and the efforts of the Combat Air Patrol. At 0947 the enemy cleared the area, leaving LAFHEY incredibly afloat,

SHIPS NAMED LAFHEY

after having taken four bomb hits, five kamikaze hits, and having been grazed by three more suicide attacks.

Of LAFHEY's men, 32 were killed or missing, and almost 70 more were wounded. Her steering gear was jammed 26° left, allowing her to steam only in circles. Fires and flooding aft were not yet under control. Her after twin 5" mount was destroyed, as were seven of her 11 20mm guns and four of her 12 40mm guns. What remained of her fire power could be operated only in local control.

A magnificent job of damage control soon brought fires and flooding under control, and at 1245 LAFHEY was taken in tow by MACOMB (DMS-23). Two hours later, a tug took over the towing job, and shortly thereafter, another tug arrived to aid in damage control. LAFHEY finally arrived at anchorage off Okinawa at 0614 the following morning, 17 April.

Temporary repairs were rushed to completion, and LAFHEY was able to sail for Saipan 22 April 1945, arriving there five days later. Here further repairs to radar and steering gear were effected, and on 1 May LAFHEY got underway under her own power for Eniwetok. But she was not yet out of danger, for on 2 May she had to heave to for two hours to repair a soft patch below the water line, through which she was taking water. Arriving safely at Eniwetok 4 May, she departed next day for Pearl Harbor, where she arrived on 12 May for further repairs. The last long leg back to the United States and permanent repairs began 14 May, and on 24 May she arrived at Seattle, Wash.

LAFHEY went on public display at Seattle and Tacoma, in connection with a drive to recruit workers for overburdened west coast shipyards. On 4 June, she at last entered the Todd Shipyard for alteration, overhaul, and battle damage repairs, which continued until 31 August 1945. She steamed south for refresher training off San Diego, which was interrupted when more of the bad luck she could not seem to shake came her way. On 11 September, while underway from San Diego to her exercises area, she and PC-815 collided in fog near the sea buoy, and a few minutes later the PC sank. All but one of the PC's crew were rescued by LAFHEY and a submarine which the PC had been escorting. LAFHEY was forced to put in to San Diego for repairs which were completed 28 September.

On 5 October 1945, LAFHEY was once more ready for duty, and sailed from San Diego for Pearl Harbor. Here she reported for local operations in Hawaiian waters, after which she participated in the Atomic Bomb tests at Bikini, actively engaged in collecting scientific data. She was based at Pearl Harbor until 30 June 1947, when she was decommissioned and placed in reserve at San Diego.

LAFHEY, with her great tradition as a fighting ship, was recommissioned 26 January 1951, and began preparations for service in the Korean conflict. After shakedown training off San Diego, she proceeded through the Panama Canal to Norfolk, where she underwent an extensive overhaul followed by refresher training at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Late in 1951 she participated in fleet hunter-killer operations in the Atlantic.

LAFHEY, with the other vessels of Destroyer Division 261, cleared Norfolk

SHIPS NAMED LAFFEY

22 January 1952 for the Panama Canal Zone, San Diego, Pearl Harbor, Midway, and Yokosuka, Japan, where she arrived 27 February. She operated with Task Force 77 off the east coast of Korea, 3-31 March, serving as flagship for Commander, Destroyer Division 261, who was acting as Screen Commander.

Until 29 April 1952, LAFFEY conducted hunter-killer operations and ASW training off Okinawa and Japan, and had tender availability at Sasebo. She returned to Wonsan 29 April, and until 28 May was assigned to the Bombardment and Blockade Group operating inside Wonsan Harbor. During this time, she acted as flagship for Commander, East Coast Blockade and Patrol Group. Although several times subjected to enemy fire from shore batteries, LAFFEY emerged from her tour of duty with no casualties, and no material damage to the ship. Her duties included fire support for minesweepers, and she was successful in her bombardment of several shore positions.

LAFFEY again served with Task Force 77 off the east coast of Korea 6-16 June 1952, and sailed for home 22 June, travelling by way of the Mediterranean to Norfolk, where she dropped anchor 19 August.

Leave and upkeep occupied LAFFEY from 19 August to 15 October 1952, when she began hunter-killer operations out of Norfolk until 15 December. After leave and upkeep, she departed Norfolk 9 January 1953 for hunter-killer operations in the Caribbean until 20 February. She sailed back to the Caribbean for similar operations from 10 to 20 March. From 21 March to 28 May, LAFFEY engaged in training operations in the Norfolk area.

LAFFEY cleared Norfolk 29 May 1953 for Nassau, where on 2 June in a tropical downpour, she joined British units in a gun salute to Queen Elizabeth II of England on her Coronation Day. She returned to Norfolk to prepare for an overhaul at Philadelphia Navy Yard 17 June-2 October, after which she sailed for refresher training at Guantanamo until 7 December.

LAFFEY returned to Norfolk for the holiday season and to make preparations for her second world cruise, for which she sailed 1 February 1954. She called at the Canal Zone, San Diego, Pearl Harbor, and Midway enroute to her rendezvous with Task Force 75 in the Far East 9 March. She then began operations on patrol, blockade and plane-guard duty off the Korean coast, along with training in Japanese waters. She left the Far East 29 June, bound for Suez, the Mediterranean, and Norfolk, and upon her return, underwent type training, had plane-guard duties, and participated in fleet exercises.

On 7 October 1954, while proceeding to an assigned operation area off the Virginia Capes, LAFFEY was ordered to assist in the rescue of the schooner ABLE LADY. In high seas and winds up to 30 knots, she rescued the schooner's passengers after the vessel sank. During the first part of 1955, LAFFEY participated extensively in anti-submarine exercises, visiting the Caribbean, and on 29 June, Halifax, Nova Scotia. During August, she moved twice to hurricane anchorage where she successfully rode out Hurricane Connie and Diane. In September, she participated briefly in Operation New Broom IV, a convoy exercise, with NATO forces, and then returned to Norfolk, but had to move almost at once to hurricane anchorage to ride out Hurricane Ione.